

PATENT**PENDING CLAIMS AS AMENDED**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) An apparatus for validating a vehicle operator, comprising:
an input device for allowing entry of vehicle operator identification information;
a transceiver for transmitting and receiving messages;
an interface for allowing a processor to communicate with a vehicle sub-system;

and

said processor connected to said input device, said transceiver, and said interface, said processor for receiving said vehicle operator identification information from said input device, for generating a message comprising said vehicle operator identification information and providing said message to said transceiver, said transceiver for transmitting said message to a remote location, said processor further for controlling operation of said vehicle by way of said interface until a response to said message is received by said transceiver.

2. (Original) An apparatus for validating a vehicle operator, comprising:
an input device for allowing entry of vehicle operator identification information;
a transceiver for transmitting a message in response to entry of said vehicle operator identification information and for receiving a response to said message;
an interface for allowing a processor to communicate with a vehicle sub-system;

and

a processor connected to said input device, said transceiver, and said interface, said processor for receiving said vehicle operator identification information from said input device, for generating said message comprising said vehicle operator identification information and providing said message to said transceiver, for receiving said response from said transceiver and for controlling said vehicle sub-system, via said interface, based on said response.

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3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein said response comprises impairing operation of a vehicle associated with said apparatus.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises preventing said vehicle from starting.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises disabling a vehicle ignition system.
6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle fuel system.
7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises flashing a vehicle headlight, a vehicle taillight, or a vehicle interior light.
8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises sounding a vehicle horn.
9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle transmission.
10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein impairing operation of a vehicle transmission comprises limiting the number of gears that may be used during operation of said vehicle.
11. (Original) A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method for validating a vehicle operator, said method comprising operations of:
receiving vehicle operator identification information from a user interface;

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generating a validation message comprising said vehicle operator identification information;

transmitting said validation message to a remote location;

receiving a response to said validation message; and

controlling operation of a vehicle based on instructions contained in said response.

12. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 11 wherein the operation of controlling operation of a vehicle comprises impairing operation of a vehicle.

13. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises preventing said vehicle from starting.

14. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises disabling a vehicle ignition system.

15. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle fuel system.

16. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises flashing a vehicle headlight, a vehicle taillight, or a vehicle interior light.

17. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises sounding a vehicle horn.

18. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 12, wherein impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle transmission.

19. (Original) The signal-bearing medium of claim 18, wherein impairing operation of a vehicle transmission comprises limiting the number of gears that may be used during operation of said vehicle.

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20. (New) Apparatus at a vehicle location for validating a vehicle operator to operate selected functions of a vehicle, comprising:

an input device for entry of vehicle operator identification information;

a transceiver for transmitting said vehicle operator identification information to a remote location for validation and receiving from said remote location a reply message specifying which of said selected functions the operator is validated to operate;

and means for enabling said selected functions specified by said reply message.

21. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a headlight of said vehicle.

22. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a tail light of said vehicle.

23. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a vehicle interior light of said vehicle.

24. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein selected functions comprise sounding a horn of said vehicle.

25. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said selected functions comprise impairing operation of a vehicle associated with said apparatus.

26. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises preventing said vehicle from starting.

27. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises disabling a vehicle ignition system.

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28. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said selected functions comprise impairing a fuel system of said vehicle.

29. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle transmission.

30. (New) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said impairing a vehicle transmission comprises limiting the number of gears that may be used during operation of said vehicle.

31. (New) The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said selected functions are selected from a group consisting of enabling an operation of the vehicle, specifying a time during which the vehicle may be operated, enabling the vehicle to be started; enabling an ignition system of the vehicle, enabling a fuel system of the vehicle, flashing a headlight, taillight, or interior light of the vehicle, sounding a horn of the vehicle, impairing a transmission of the vehicle, and limiting a number of gears that may be used during operation of the vehicle, establishing a distance over which the vehicle may be driven.

32. (New) Apparatus at a vehicle location for validating a vehicle operator to operate selected functions of a vehicle, comprising:

an input device for entry of vehicle operator identification information;

a transceiver for transmitting a message to a remote location at which vehicle functions are selected based upon said operator identification information, and receiving from said remote location a reply message specifying which of said selected functions the operator is validated to operate;

and means for enabling said selected functions specified by said reply message.

33. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a headlight of said vehicle.

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34. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a tail light of said vehicle.

35. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a vehicle interior light of said vehicle.

36. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein selected functions comprise sounding a horn of said vehicle.

37. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said selected functions comprise impairing operation of a vehicle associated with said apparatus.

38. (New) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises preventing said vehicle from starting.

39. (New) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises disabling a vehicle ignition system.

40. (New) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said selected functions comprise impairing a fuel system of said vehicle.

41. (New) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle transmission.

42. (New) The apparatus of claim 41 wherein said impairing a vehicle transmission comprises limiting the number of gears that may be used during operation of said vehicle.

43. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said selected functions are selected from a group consisting of enabling an operation of the vehicle, specifying a time during which the vehicle may be operated, enabling the vehicle to be started; enabling an ignition system of the

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vehicle, enabling a fuel system of the vehicle, flashing a headlight, taillight, or interior light of the vehicle, sounding a horn of the vehicle, impairing a transmission of the vehicle, and limiting a number of gears that may be used during operation of the vehicle, establishing a distance over which the vehicle may be driven.

44. (New) A method for validating a vehicle operator to operate selected functions of a vehicle, comprising:

entering vehicle operator identification information into a device located at said vehicle;

transmitting said vehicle operator identification information to a remote location for validation and receiving from said remote location a reply message specifying which of said selected functions the operator is validated to operate;

and enabling said selected functions specified by said reply message.

45. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions comprise sounding a horn of said vehicle.

46. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a headlight of said vehicle.

47. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing a tail light of said vehicle.

48. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions comprise flashing an interior light of said vehicle.

49. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions comprise impairing operation of a vehicle associated with said apparatus.

50. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises preventing said vehicle from starting.

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51. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises disabling a vehicle ignition system.

52. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle fuel system.

53. (New) The method of claim 49 wherein said impairing operation of said vehicle comprises impairing a vehicle transmission.

54. (New) The method of claim 53 wherein said impairing operation of a vehicle transmission comprises limiting the number of gears that may be used during operation of said vehicle.

55. (New) The method of claim 44 wherein said selected functions are selected from a group consisting of enabling an operation of the vehicle, specifying a time during which the vehicle may be operated, enabling the vehicle to be started; enabling an ignition system of the vehicle, enabling a fuel system of the vehicle, flashing a headlight, taillight, or interior light of the vehicle, sounding a horn of the vehicle, impairing a transmission of the vehicle, and limiting a number of gears that may be used during operation of the vehicle, establishing a distance over which the vehicle may be driven.